



Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

Doctrinal Catechesis Sessions for adults based on
the Church Year, the Liturgy, & the Sunday Scriptures

Breaking Open the Word

by Mary Birmingham

Third Sunday of Easter A



Abraham Bloemart, 1622: Supper at Emmaus



Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Option 1. Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.

Option 2.

Prayer

*God of mercy,
You wash away our sins in water,
You give us new birth in the Spirit,
And redeem us in the blood of Christ.
As we celebrate Christ's resurrection
Increase our awareness of these blessings,
And renew your gift of life within us.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God forever and ever.*

[Second Sunday of Easter, Morning Prayer, Christian Prayer 452]

Catholic
**Faith, Life
& Creed**
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Breaking Open the
Word worksheets
connect with *Catholic
Faith, Life, & Creed*
Doctrinal Sessions.

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Liturgical Context

- ▶ The Emmaus story in today's Gospel unfolds for us a microcosm of the Eucharistic liturgy. People gather, hospitality is extended, scripture is proclaimed and explained, a meal is shared and conversion is invited.
- ▶ The disciples share with the *Stranger* the events that had taken place in Jerusalem. As in the Eucharistic liturgy, in the sharing *He* became present. Jesus was no longer a *Stranger*; he was recognized as their Lord and Master.
- ▶ When Catholics gather to remember a sacred event, it is experienced as present—not some abstract past memory.
- ▶ The sacraments of the Church remember and make present to us the life, mission, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. *Remembering that makes that which is remembered present* is called anamnesis.
- ▶ When we worship and remember sacred events we bring those events into the present so that we too are given access to the saving power of Christ today.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two, and then surface insights in the wider group.

- ▶ What spoke to your heart in today's liturgy?
- ▶ What reading, symbol, music, homily, spoke to you and why did it speak to you?
- ▶ What touched you the most in today's Gospel?

If time is a consideration, omit reflection on one of the readings.

First Reading: Acts 2:14, 22-28

- ▶ Peter is preaching the Paschal Mystery (the life, death, resurrection, ascension of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit) to the crowd.
- ▶ He not only preached Christ crucified and risen, he preached about Jesus' passage from death to life—a passage we must all take—not simply at the end of our lives, but each and every day.
- ▶ Peter hearkened back to the reign of David to prove Jesus was the promised Messiah—the *Faithful One of God* heralded in the psalms.
- ▶ Peter interpreted the biblical text to illustrate Christ was the promised one of the Scriptures. Jesus uses the same teaching method in the Emmaus encounter.
- ▶ Peter invites conversion and repentance.
- ▶ Peter insists that the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus. This was a common theme in post resurrection homilies presented to Jewish crowds. (It is important to note that some commentators insist that when evangelists refer to the death of Jesus at the hands of the Jews, it is mostly a reference to Jewish religious leaders, not Jewish people en masse.)
- ▶ The early Christian kerygma affirmed that Jesus conquered sin and death.
- ▶ Death was understood in antiquity as an end to all human relationships and a person's relationship with God.
- ▶ Death was also understood as complete alienation from God as a result of human sin and rebellion.

- ▶ Death had no power over Jesus (as it did over other human beings) because of the unity and intimacy he shared with his Father.
- ▶ Jesus conquered death—not in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense. Jesus was not alienated from God. Jesus shared intimacy and union with God.
- ▶ As a result of Jesus' intimate union with his Father, he conquered death forever.
- ▶ Death did not have the last word as it always had in the past. In other words, Jesus' death did not end in the finality of physical death.
- ▶ Jesus was victorious over sin and death. Death no longer meant the severing of human relationship. Death no longer meant alienation from God.
- ▶ Jesus returned to his father's throne and in so doing opened the gates of heaven for all believers. Death would no longer have the last word for any faithful believer.



Mystagogy

reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two, and then surface brief insights in the wider group. Catechist responds with a “brief” story from his or her life.

- ▶ What is the Good News in this reading?
- ▶ What are the implications for your life in this reading?
- ▶ What does it mean to you that Jesus conquered death?
- ▶ Have you ever known alienation or separation from God? Describe the experience and what it means to you to know that Christ (through eyes of faith) conquered sin and alienation once and for all?
- ▶ Do you believe the previous statement? What evidence is there in your world that could illustrate that Peter's words are true?

Second Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-21

- ▶ Peter makes comparisons between baptism and the Paschal Mystery of Jesus.
- ▶ Baptism invites us deeply into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection.
- ▶ Peter's first letter connects Jesus' passage from death to life with the Passover itself.
- ▶ We are all freed from slavery to sin as a result of Jesus' death and resurrection.
- ▶ Jesus ransomed humankind; the price he paid was his free flowing blood—his very own life force.
- ▶ He gave his will, his body and his spirit completely over to God.
- ▶ As a result of Jesus' kenosis (the outpouring of himself) we were/are freed and made whole. In other words, we were/are saved and set free.
- ▶ We can do no less than give praise and thanks to God for so great a gift and thus live a righteous, upright and moral life.
- ▶ We are called to live in the shadow of the cross and pattern our lives after the

kenosis of Christ.

- ▶ Prior to our life in Christ our lives had no meaning.
- ▶ The Paschal Mystery of Christ affords us the hope of eternal life with him.
- ▶ Christ is the new Passover Lamb who freed us from slavery—slavery to sin, oppression, addiction, and the false, sinful self.
- ▶ We pass from death to life and are made a new creation in Christ.
- ▶ The prophet Isaiah foretold the redemption of humanity by the blood of the Suffering Servant. Jesus was the Lamb of God who was led to his slaughter for the sins of the world.
- ▶ Peter reminded the people that they were/are present-day beneficiaries of the promises of God.
- ▶ They were witnesses to the Christ-event in their day and in their time.
- ▶ Jesus inaugurated the final age as was prophesied by the prophets of the Old Testament.
- ▶ We continue to celebrate the reign of God now as we await the reign of God yet to come. We live in that constant tension between now and not yet.
- ▶ We can do no less as Christians than to be attentive to our relationship with God in Christ.



Mystagogy

reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two and then surface brief insights in the wider group.

- ▶ In what way is this reading a comforting or consoling word?
- ▶ What does it mean to you that we live in the tension of now and not yet? What are the implications for your life?
- ▶ In what way if any have you responded to the great gift of Christ's ultimate sacrifice for you and for the world? What do you think God wants from you in return?

Gospel Luke 24: 13-35

The Gospel is long and contains many themes worthy of reflection. If time is an issue, the catechist may select which section[s] of the following exegesis upon which to focus the group's attention. Read or summarize the Gospel, perhaps provide a copy of the text for further reflection.

Gospel Exegesis

Please note: catechist may intersperse the questions at the end of the exegesis throughout your presentation where appropriate.) Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions before presenting the exegesis.

- ▶ What specifically touched you in this Gospel?
- ▶ What does this Gospel mean to you?

- ▶ The drama in today's Gospel reads like a page-turning novel.
- ▶ Two downcast disciples, on their return from the horrific events in Jerusalem are musing about what they had just experienced.
- ▶ They meet a stranger along the way.
- ▶ Like a Shakespearean play the audience knows the identity of the stranger, but the disciples do not.
- ▶ Luke uses this little vignette to alert the reader to Jesus' new mode of presence.
- ▶ Jesus carries on a conversation with his friends and yet they do not recognize him. Something is different. What is it?
- ▶ The twenty-fourth chapter of Luke posits a catechetical method that continues to be an effective tool of evangelization today. Ultimately the underlying principle of this method affirms that those who share the Good News with others also interpret the Good News they shared.
- ▶ Jesus presented the disciples with a model for the entire burgeoning church. When he explained the prophets to his disciples he was showing them that they too must interpret the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah (about himself) in light of the whole Christ event—the Paschal Mystery.
- ▶ Luke's interpretation of the Christ event can be summed up as follows: God sent his Son Jesus to save the world and like prophets before him he too was rejected.
- ▶ Luke's ultimate goal in the twenty-fourth chapter is to explain the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection.
- ▶ No matter how many times Jesus tried to explain the significance of his pending death to his disciples before his death, they simply could not grasp what he was trying to teach them.
- ▶ It takes an entire chapter to bring the disciples out of their fog of bewilderment into the light of insight.
- ▶ Why are they so bewildered? They should not have been surprised when they encountered the empty tomb. Jesus told them what to expect.
- ▶ Peter ran to the tomb. We are told that he was *astonished* and that he did not believe the angel. When *astonished* was used in the Bible it generally meant *amazement*, but not an amazement that necessarily brought about conversion.
- ▶ The women who were chastised by the angel were *amazed*. The angel asked them why they looked for the living among the dead. In other words, their faith should have helped them understand. The empty tomb should not have elicited surprise.
- ▶ Jesus told them all what to expect, yet they still refused to believe when the women tried to tell them about the angel's revelation.
- ▶ The word *astonished* was also used in reference to those who were amazed by Jesus and his miracles but nevertheless opposed him and his mission.
- ▶ In today's pericope Jesus leads them into the mystery of his death and resurrection.
- ▶ The prophets foretold the coming of the messiah.
- ▶ Now, today, on this Emmaus road, the teachable moment was at hand. It was time for Jesus to unveil the fullness of his saving plan through Jesus, the Christ.

- ▶ Jesus engaged in mystagogical reflection with the disciples. He invited them deeply into the mystery.
- ▶ Jesus gave them the necessary space to express their feelings and name their understanding of the events that just took place in Jerusalem.
 - They expressed their dismay over the failure of Jesus' mission and their dashed hopes for the new kingdom of God.
 - They failed to see victory in the torture and death of Christ.
 - They failed to see any meaning whatsoever in Jesus' senseless suffering and death.
 - The cross was a curse, an abomination.
 - A king, after all was intended to reign in splendor from a gilded throne, not the wood of a cross.
 - Power in weakness? How absurd!
- ▶ They "saw" the risen Christ, yet they did not "see" who he really was.
- ▶ Their inability to accept or understand Jesus' passion and death made it impossible for them to recognize him.
- ▶ God sent an angel to explain the event to them, but it would take the risen Christ himself to open their eyes.
- ▶ Luke crafts the scene with dripping irony in order to illustrate the implications of human blindness. Imagine the following!
 - The disciples tried to teach **Jesus** about who **Jesus** was!
 - They chastised Jesus for his ignorance about the events in Jerusalem, when they were the ignorant ones.



Mystagogy

reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to reflect on one or more of the following questions.

- ▶ Put yourself in the place of the disciples. How difficult would it be to understand that God was doing something wonderful through suffering, absurdity and weakness? Is that any less unbelievable today? Are we not a culture of strength through strength, not strength through weakness? What is the message for us as Christians?
- ▶ In what way do we continue to be blind today when it comes to Jesus' saving plan of salvation for the world? What are some obstacles to "seeing" what God has done and is doing in and through his Son Jesus?
- ▶ The purpose of the Emmaus events was to teach the implications of Jesus *pasche*—that it was necessary for Jesus to suffer, die and rise from the dead in order for Jesus to return to his Father's throne in heaven. It was God's ultimate plan of salvation for the world as revealed in sacred Scripture.
- ▶ Atonement for sin is not presented as a reason for Jesus' death in either the Gospel of Luke or the Acts of the Apostles. Thus it begs the question: "Why did

- Jesus have to die?”
- Since it was foretold in Scripture it was not open to negotiation. Disciples were not to question it; they were simply to accept it. God did not need human approval for his decisions.
 - While disciples may have thought they were privy to God’s intentions, they soon discovered they were not.
 - Human arrogance leads to the fool’s errand of assuming absolute knowledge of God’s will or God’s intentions. God does not have to report to human beings about his every decision.
 - If Scripture proclaimed that Jesus’ death was necessary, then far be it from a mere mortal to question the mind of God!
 - By mentioning Moses, Jesus hearkened back to the biblical prophets of Scripture.
 - Moses was the great prophet of biblical tradition yet he too was rejected. In spite of that rejection God chose him to deliver his people out of bondage.
 - All prophets are subject to a similar fate—rejection, suffering, death and ultimately God’s vindication.
 - Jesus was understood by Luke’s community to be a Prophet and Messiah. Just like the prophets of the Old Testament Jesus suffered and died but was ultimately vindicated by God through his resurrection to glory with the Father.
 - ▶ The text reveals another irony. The death of Christ, which was understood as the ultimate rejection of God, became the very means of God’s salvation for the world!
 - ▶ Why, then must Jesus suffer?
 - All prophets carry the burden of their mission and must suffer for it.
 - Prophets are God-bearers—they bear the word of God and willing to die for its transmission.
 - It is the destiny of all prophets.
 - The mission of the prophet finds its fulfillment in his martyrdom.
 - ▶ Jesus opened the eyes of his disciples by showing them their own prophetic destiny—a destiny shared by all would-be disciples/prophets/martyrs.
 - ▶ Jesus sought to help the disciples better understand God’s revelation in Scripture and the implications.
 - ▶ The author employs an exit device that illustrates another important principle. It appears as though Jesus is about to leave his disciples; yet he remains. He does not leave. Why? He is the Good Shepherd that does not abandon his flock.



Mystagogy

reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions.

- ▶ What have you heard thus far and what does it mean to you?
- ▶ What is Jesus trying to teach his disciples? Why is this a relevant message for us today?
- ▶ In what way can you see yourself fulfilling your own prophetic destiny? How might you suffer for the sake of the Gospel and the mission we are to promote in the world?
- ▶ Why is it significant for us that Jesus did not leave (he stayed with the disciples)?

The meal.

- ▶ Jesus stayed with his disciples—Jesus the Good Shepherd remained with his flock.
- ▶ The disciples, still unaware of Jesus' identity, invited him to stay and eat with them. They offered him hospitality—hospitality to a stranger—a biblical imperative.
- ▶ Luke's use of the word *stay* implied that the one who stays makes himself or herself at home with the person or persons with whom they are staying. They dwell with them. The contemporary Spanish axiom, "*mi casa es su casa* (*my house is your house*)" captures the essence of what it meant to "stay" at a person's house.
- ▶ The hospitality the disciples extended to Jesus has its roots in the biblical tradition. To offer hospitality was the same as offering God's divine hospitality to the stranger, the foreigner or the friend.
- ▶ Sharing a meal and breaking bread together ¹ was the common means of offering such hospitality.
- ▶ When we extend hospitality to the stranger, the oppressed, the depressed, the poor, the lonely and the marginalized, we follow God's command to offer God's own divine hospitality.
- ▶ Paradoxically the disciples invited Jesus to dinner, but Jesus is the one who served the meal to his friends.
- ▶ Jesus took, blessed, broke and shared the bread with the disciples—the four-fold action we recognize in the Eucharist—taking, blessing, sharing and giving.
- ▶ Readers immediately became aware that the meal was not a customary meal. When the reader is told that the guests *reclined* at table—readers were alerted that it was a special meal.
- ▶ Reclining at table was reserved for the most special occasions.
- ▶ Just as the word of God in the liturgy of the word today prepares us to more fully

¹ The word companion derives from *cum*-with, panis-bread—in other words a companion is one who shares bread with the companion.

encounter Christ in the Eucharist, Jesus' interpretation of God's word prepared his disciples to recognize him in the breaking of the bread.

- ▶ Something touched their corporate memory—the familiar action they remembered—taking, blessing, breaking and sharing bread.
- ▶ This four step action was used in two Eucharistic stories in the Scriptures—the feeding of the multitudes and the Last Supper.
- ▶ Jesus very intentionally used this Eucharistic action to call to mind the rituals that were shared when he was alive.
- ▶ Jesus recalled a past action he shared with them and effectively brought it into their present.
- ▶ This is what takes place every time we celebrate Eucharist. We remember Jesus' past action of taking, blessing, breaking and sharing the Bread of Life and we bring it into the present. We recognize him in those four-fold actions.
- ▶ The word we use for this remembering is called *anamnesis*—a remembering that makes that which is remembered present and active.
- ▶ Not only was Jesus' recognized, but his passion, death and resurrection were brought into sharp focus in their ritual encounter with him.
- ▶ Now they understand the meaning behind Jesus' death. Now they can believe and embrace his resurrection—they saw the risen Lord! Now they have a new appreciation of what it means to take, bless, break and share the Bread of Life.
- ▶ The veil was lifted from their eyes. They could return joyfully to Jerusalem, face the future with new courage and hope and joyfully report their experience to the others.
- ▶ They returned only to discover that Peter had experienced a similar encounter.



Mystagogy

reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in small groups of four. Use the last three or four minutes to surface the insights in the wider group. Catechist begins by sharing story from his or her life. See the appendix for an example.

- ▶ What are the implications of the meal segment of today's Gospel? Why is it cause for great rejoicing for us?
- ▶ In what way does this entire story echo what we celebrate in the Mass each and every week?
- ▶ What does it teach us about the purpose of the liturgy of the word?
- ▶ What does it teach us about what we believe about the Eucharist itself?
- ▶ What does it teach us about the presence of Christ in the Eucharist?
- ▶ In what way, if any, has this Gospel spoken to you about your belief in the Eucharist?
- ▶ What does this Gospel teach us about the importance of the Eucharist in our lives, especially when it comes to living the Christian mission?

Concluding Prayer

Repeat OPENING PRAYER for this session OR
Minor rite: Blessing: 95-97.

APPENDIX

Jesus wanted his friends to know that even though he was no longer going to be physically present, they still had intimate access to their relationship with him. He showed them the way in which he would continue to be present to them in the midst of his absence—in the taking, blessing, breaking, sharing the Bread of Life—in the taking, blessing, sharing and drinking the Blood of Salvation. Presence in absence—the way in which we are strengthened for mission, strengthened to endure life’s hardships, strengthened to rejoice when the world tells us we are fools to do so.

What a gift we have been given. St. Catherine of Siena said, “Christ is a mad lover—what a mad lover he is—to have given himself to us as FOOD!” I understand this most fully when life seems the most difficult. Sharing Christ in the Eucharist is the way I can sacramentally touch his love for me and be reminded that he walked before me in the sorrows of life and walks with me now in the midst of them.

My child is now gone. In his mental illness he left the security of home and is traveling on the road with few resources, looking for a better life that will never materialize. His disease has taught me what true powerlessness means. His family that loves him can do nothing to save him. I have always believed that every problem carries within it a solution if only we would work hard enough to discover it. What I have learned in this illness is that there are no human solutions. God is the only solution left. The gift of this illness is for me to discover that there is a God and I am not it! I am truly, absolutely powerless in this situation. I cannot secure help for my very sick child.

This powerlessness has taught me what it means to rely on God for everything—for life itself. It is easy and very cliché to say, “Turn your child over to God.” I always wondered what that meant since I thought I had done that over and over again. In my opinion, however, God had not fared much better with my son than we had!

This time, however, things were different. Out of the ashes of deep, gut-wrenching sorrow was born a peace that passes all understanding. When my son left, I kissed him and told him that he would always have a family that loved him. I waved goodbye and extended my arms heavenward and said to God, “Lord he is yours now. You love him as much as I do. You know his illness better than I do. You know what he needs better than I do. Lead the way. Show us how to respond to him. Your will be done, not mine. No matter what happens to him, he is now under your care and supervision. There is nothing more I can do. I am completely and utterly powerless.

This child who turned away from his comfortable home is now homeless and living in his car. He survived thirty below zero nights in his car without freezing to death and is still in contact with us.

No matter what happens to him, for the first time in twelve years I am at peace. I know I am powerless and that God is with him and with us. Every time I approach the Sunday table of sacrifice I drink from the cup and pray that Christ’s blood flow through me out

to my son who cannot be present to experience this awesome gift of presence in the midst of absence. I continue to entrust him to Christ and his most precious Blood!

Christ's *Presence in Absence* is what has sustained me through the absurdity of twelve years of schizophrenia in the life of my son. God walks with us in this tremendous sorrow. But more importantly God walks with my child. The only comfort he knows is the consolation he receives from his intimate relationship with God. On some level I am beginning to think there is no place for my child to call home. The restlessness of his disease keeps him forever on the move searching for a utopia that does not exist. If I never see him again, I know he wanders with a companion, the risen Christ who never abandons his flock, especially the little ones who cannot take care of themselves. I trust that only good can come from such trust.

Today's Gospel is a reminder of the hope that sustains us. I can do no less than love others as Christ has loved and walked with me, my family and my child who so desperately need his risen presence.



Connecting Liturgy with Catholic Doctrine

Possible doctrinal themes that flow from this week's
Liturgy of the Word and Eucharist

Sacraments
Evangelization
Morality
Moral Decision Making
Baptism
Confirmation

Symbols of Bread and Wine
Church and Ecclesiology
Church Structure
Eucharist Series

Other themes may be chosen as well--choose from the scope and sequence chart and create your own connecting statement. The following statements make the appropriate connections between the doctrinal issue you have chosen and the liturgy of the day.

SACRAMENTS

The disciples recognize Jesus in his post resurrection appearance at Emmaus in the breaking of the bread—a sacramental action that manifests his presence. Sacraments continue Christ's saving mission in our day and our time. We are given access to his ministry through the sacraments. The Church teaches that the sacraments of the Church manifest Christ's own Paschal Mystery—his passion, death and resurrection. We remember what Christ did and in the process the Paschal Mystery is made present to us. We are given access to his healing, reconciling and salvific mission through the sacraments. It is thus most appropriate that we focus our attention today on what the Church teaches about sacraments—the celebrations/rituals that bring the healing, reconciling, saving mission of Christ into our midst—that make present Christ's life, passion, death, resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Thus today our doctrinal session will focus on what the Church teaches about SACRAMENTS.

EVANGELIZATION

Peter preaches before the crowds in Jerusalem. He told the people that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah foretold by the prophets. Peter is an icon for us today of what it means to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. Baptism requires that we live our role as priest to serve God's people, prophet to proclaim God's word through our words and actions and king to lead people to Christ. It is thus fitting that we focus our attention on our Easter faith and what Jesus commanded us to do--go out and preach the Good News to all the nations. Today's doctrinal session will focus on what the Church teaches about EVANGELIZATION.

MORALITY

1 Peter insists that our response in faith to Christ's great gift of salvation is to live the moral life. It is thus fitting that we focus our doctrinal session on the implications of the Easter event—to live lives in accord with the Gospel—to live the moral life. Thus we will focus our attention on the MORAL LIFE.

MORAL DECISION MAKING

1 Peter insists that our response in faith to Christ's great gift of salvation is to live the moral life. It is thus fitting that we focus our doctrinal session on the implications of the Easter event—to live lives in accord with the Gospel—to live the moral life. How do we live the moral life? We make choices. We choose to live the moral life or we do not. We choose to make a moral decision. Thus it is fitting that our doctrinal session today will focus on MORAL DECISION MAKING.

BAPTISM

The second reading today draws a close parallel between baptism and incorporation into the life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Holy Spirit that encompasses what we refer to as the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. At the Easter Vigil the elect were baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. The liturgy itself makes the sacraments of initiation an important focus for our doctrinal session. Thus it is fitting that our doctrinal session will focus on the SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

At the Easter Vigil the elect were baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. The liturgy itself makes the sacraments of initiation an important focus for our doctrinal sessions. The sacrament of confirmation anoints the person with God's Spirit and conforms their life intimately to Christ's life—thus strengthening them to fully participate in the Paschal Mystery of Christ that was manifested par excellence at the Easter Vigil. Through this sacrament we are given the strength to profess faith in Christ. During the weeks of Easter we have a front row seat watching the early Church go out and spread the Christian faith when we hear the Acts of the Apostles proclaimed each week. Thus today it is fitting that we focus our attention on the SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION.

SYMBOLS OF BREAD AND WINE

Jesus takes bread and breaks it in the Emmaus Gospel story today. The disciples recognize him in the breaking of the bread—the sacramental presence of Christ—the manifestation of his presence. At the Easter Vigil the elect were baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. The liturgy itself makes the sacraments of initiation an important focus for our doctrinal sessions. The sacrament of Eucharist fully incorporates the neophyte into the Eucharistic community. When we eat the Bread of Life and drink his Blood we share fully in his Paschal Mystery. The sacraments of initiation incorporate the neophyte into the Paschal Mystery of Christ—his life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension and the sending of the Spirit that was manifested par excellence in the Easter Vigil liturgy. Thus today it is fitting that we focus our attention on the sacramental SYMBOLS OF BREAD AND WINE.

CHURCH AND ECCLESIOLOGY

Throughout the Easter season, Luke, the author of Acts and the Gospel of Luke charts the development of the emerging church—the fledgling communities. The church exists to establish the reign of God now as Christians await the coming of Christ in the age to come. It is thus appropriate to focus our attention on what the Church teaches about CHURCH AND ECCLESIOLOGY.

CHURCH STRUCTURE

Throughout the Easter season, Luke, the author of Acts and the Gospel of Luke charts the development of the emerging church—the fledgling communities. The church exists to establish the reign of God now as Christians await the coming of Christ in the age to come. The church was unified in heart and purpose. They shared all things in common. They upheld the ideal Church as they worked to achieve that end. Ministry was needed in the community and a clear definition of roles. Those roles continue today. It is thus appropriate to focus our attention on what the Church teaches about CHURCH STRUCTURE.

EUCHARIST SERIES:

Our premier celebration of the Paschal Mystery—the life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension sending of the Spirit is made manifest and re-presented for us in the Eucharistic liturgy. Thus any Sunday would be an appropriate time to focus our attention on the Eucharistic liturgy. Today we will focus on part ____ of the Eucharistic Series.